

Living in the Margins: The Male Homosexual Experience in Salvador



Silvano Gonzalez
Cristiano Ferreras Santos
Vice President of Grupo Gay da Bahia
School for International Training–CSA Brazil–
Northeast
Spring 2007

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Abstract	4
Introduction	5
Personal/Professional Motives for Choice of Research Topic	7
Importance of Research	8
Location of Research	9
Methodology of Research	15
Definition of Terms	17
Literature Review/Context	19
Interviews	23
Questionnaire	24
Cristiano	26
Octavio	30
Marcelo	34
Luiz Mott	36
Conclusion	41
Bibliography	42
Indications for Further Research	43
Appendix A	44
Appendix B	44
Appendix C	45
Appendix D	46

Acknowledgments

Muito obrigado a todos por seu ajuda. Especificamente, eu quero agradecer a Octavio Reis Filho, Cristiano Ferreras Santos, Marcelo Cerqueira, Luiz Mott, e todos os rapais das reuniões da quarta-feira. Jamais esquecerei de meu tempo com o Grupo Gay da Bahia e de Salvador. Abraço!

Also, thanks to Oelito, Silviana, Caliny, and Bill for all your help before and during the ISP process. Obrigado! Viu?

Living in the Margins: The Male Homosexual Experience in Salvador

Silvano Gonzalez

Spring Semester 2007

Cristiano Ferreras Santos, Vice President of Grupo Gay da Bahia

School for International Training—CSA Brazil—Northeast

Abstract

Gay men across the world suffer through a reality of discrimination, violence, and hate. Academic literature supports this to be the case in Brazil, considered among many to be the world champion in the number of gay, lesbian and transsexual murders each year. Looking at the specific community of Salvador, Bahia, I have found this same homosexual reality to be the case. Though not experienced as directly as in other locations throughout Brazil, due in large part to the cities vast population and political activism, the effects of homophobia and prejudice are clearly demonstrated in this community.

My goal in this project was to see how the homosexual reality written about in books, a reality encumbered by the effects of institutional and societal discrimination, violence, hate, and preconception affected the likes of Gay men living in the city of Salvador. In working with the Grupo Gay Da Bahia, and in conducting interviews with community leader and young men affiliated with the group, I have gained a better understanding of how the academic outlining of the homosexual experience in Brazil relates to a Brazilian community in practice.

I have found that the effects of homophobia, discrimination, violence, and hate in Brazil have definitely impacted the individuals with whom I have come in contact with, as well as the Salvador community at large. A part of the global struggle for human rights and respect, the gay men that I have come across in the research process of my ISP, I a

have also found that the experience depicted in scholarly literature is, albeit at a snail's pace, becoming a thing of the past. Above all, hope exists in this community, a hope that will one day eventually bring the emancipation of the gay community throughout the world.

Introduction

Homosexuals across the world suffer the indignities of sexual repression. Discriminated against, the victims of physical and verbal violence, as well as violated both psychologically and politically, homosexual men and women have yet to see their revolution realized. Gay men and women, and everything in between, continue to live in the margins of mainstream society. Homophobia and sexual discrimination is not just a problem endemic to Brazil, or Latin America for that matter. An international crisis, discrimination, violence, and hate directed toward, or rather against, the homosexual community occur in even the most progressive societies. Further complicated by the issues of race, class, and gender, homophobia and discrimination affect different people in very different ways.¹

I feebly attempt to understand and listen to these marginalized voices. Studying abroad in Brazil, I have chosen to look at the homosexual experience in this country. Studying independently in the city of Salvador in the Brazilian state of Bahia, I have looked into one of the many aspects that make up the global crisis of oppression and dehumanization. What does this crisis and discrimination look like in Brazil, or more specifically, Salvador de Bahia in regards to homosexuals? That is a question that I am still trying to figure out even at the completion of my study. The study of the homosexual experience is varied and complex, as is the study of oppression and marginalization. The

¹ Interview with Dr. Luiz Mott 4 June 2007

four or so weeks I have been given to delve into this topic, though eye opening, infuriating, and inspiring, have only scratched the surface.

A great chunk of my study involves empirical evidence, looking at the documentation of discrimination, violence, and violations of citizenship that mark the homosexual experience in Salvador and the rest of Brazil. I offer a report on the current and most recent homosexual reality as documented by Brazilian scholars and activists. I describe my experience working with the Grupo Gay da Bahia, the oldest gay rights organization in Brazil, located in the city of Salvador. I offer a history of the organization, describe its significance in the region, and outline the ways in which it actively supports the gay male population in the city of Salvador. Working with a group of young gay men at the Grupo Gay da Bahia, I begin to ask questions concerning the homosexual reality I read about in academic books, and that reality in practice. Finally, through in depth, personal interviews with movement and community leaders, I attempt to understand the documented experience with the personal, the intellectual with the practical.

The homosexual experience in Salvador, in Brazil, and across the world is diverse and complex. I, in no way, claim to have documented or completely understood this experience in this part of the world. Continued study and elaboration is needed, much, much more than was possible in my time here. I merely present my small contribution to the ongoing struggle against the oppression of sexual expression. I only hope that you get a fraction of meaning from this monograph as I got from this experience.

Personal/Professional Motives for Choice of Research Topic

My motives for researching the male homosexual reality in the city of Salvador are two-fold. First, I am a gay male, with a Latin American background. I feel a personal connection to my area of study because I am personally affected, offended, and implicated by my area of research. As a gay, Mexican-American male I feel connected to the Brazilian struggle, particularly. Looking first at my position as a gay man, I am connected to the worldwide struggle for homosexual emancipation. Not just in Brazil, Mexico, or the United States, but across the world, millions of men and women feel the effects of institutional and societal discrimination because of their sexual orientation. I, like the men I have worked with throughout my research process, have experienced the effects of heterosexism and homophobia, of verbal and physical violence, and societal and familial discrimination. I understand the marginalization of gay men and women at an intimate level.

Secondly, as an individual of Latin American and Catholic descent, I feel personally connected to the struggle of homosexuals in this particular part of the world. Although Brazilian culture is very distinct and separate from that of Mexico or the United States, the effects of colonialism and religious indoctrination run deep throughout Latin America. I am a person of color, and understand the intersectionality of identities. I am catholic, and understand the oppressive nature of this particular institution, its impact in the lives of Latin American, and its impact on societal norms and government practices throughout the world.

Above all, I chose to research this area because I found it interesting. My topic is at the very heart of our program's educational mission. I am studying the injustice,

discrimination, alienation, and dehumanization faced by the gay community. At the forefront of the search for and the study of social justice, my research topic encompasses both my identities and my interests.

Importance of Research

Every 3 days, a homosexual individual is murdered in Brazil, the importance of my research and of my research topic lies in that fact alone. Throughout the world, gay men and women are persecuted because of their sexual orientation, denied human and civil rights, harassed verbally and physically, maimed, tortured and killed. I attempt to shed light on this reality, even if only for those who read this paper. The experiences of gay men and women throughout the world go undocumented as homosexual individuals continue to live in the margins of mainstream society, ostracized because of their sexual orientation. How often do we hear about the injustices faced by gay men and women? How often do we hear of the violence, the discrimination, and the silencing of many in this community? My goal is to contribute to the documentation of this international reality. To give voice to a community and a reality that is easily and too often overlooked by mainstream society.²

On the flipside, my research is important because it validates and affirms the hard work and sacrifice of community leaders and activists. How many people know that, though painfully slow, strides are being made in the struggle for gay rights? How many people know that a vibrant, lively, inspiring community exists amidst all the oppression and discrimination? My research aims to show that the homosexual reality is more than

² Mott, Luiz. Epidemic of Hate: Violations of the Human Rights of Gay Men, Lesbians and Transvestites in Brazil, (12-16)

just a sob story. In addition to a tale of oppression, violence, and hate, I hope to tell a story of progress, inspiration, and hope.

Location of Research

I have conducted my research in the city of Salvador, Bahia. The city is located on the Atlantic coast in the Northeastern region of the country, and is an important city in the very interesting history of Brazil. *São Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos*, known simply as Bahia for many centuries, served as the largest city in Brazil. The city, which was colonized by the Portuguese and christened in 1502, served as an important locale in the production of sugar. The production of sugar in the region called for the import of a large number of slaves, primarily from the coast of West Africa. With this history of oppression through colonization, the city of Salvador hosts, to this day, a large number of Afro-descendants.³

The legacy of slavery can be seen more acutely in the city of Salvador, compared to that of the rest of Brazil. The city of Salvador today, the third largest city in the country in terms of population its population, 2.65 million inhabitants, has the highest proportion of people of African descent than any other city in Brazil. The presence of African culture is seen throughout the city, as Salvador is considered the greatest bastion of Afro-Brazilian in the country. Syncretic (i.e., hybrid Roman Catholic and African) Yoruba derived religions such as Candomblé, and other African derived religions, such as the Congolese/Angolan-inflected Umbanda, and Quimbanda, are practiced by much of the population, in most cases in conjunction with Roman Catholicism. Capoeira, an import from the West African coast, and important source of resistance for African slaves is also practiced in the region, with more than 85% of the population participating.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvador_Bahia 28 May 2007

African dance, music, drumming, and artistry can also be seen throughout the historical center of the city, Pelourinho. This locale in the city is in many ways a microcosm of the Salvador's colonial past, a center of colonial buildings and churches surrounded by African culture and Afro-Brazilian representations.⁴

The city of Salvador is also known as a relatively gay city in Brazil. A popular destination for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) individuals in Brazil and throughout the world, Salvador is host to many GLS (gay, lesbian, sympathetic) bars, clubs, beaches, saunas, and organizations. Chief among the LGBTQ organizations in the city of Salvador, the state of Bahia, and the whole of Brazil is the Grupo Gay da Bahia. Also known as GGB, the organization is the oldest gay/human rights group operating in the country. Located in the city of Salvador, in the historic center of Pelourinho, GGB's presence is felt by homosexual communities and organizations throughout the country.⁵

I conducted the bulk of my research through the help of GGB affiliated individuals, with the help of Grupo Gay da Bahia resources, at GGB headquarters. The group's space, a colonial building in the city's historic center, can be found on a tranquil street, rather removed from the hustle and bustle of tourist activity. The space is easily overlooked. A nondescript building, without any signs, any rainbow flags, any, well, anything "gay," looks just like any other building. A step inside and one knows they are in the right place. Rainbow flags adorn walls, images, and other homo-erotica loudly proclaims the space's homosexuality. A look closer reveals more than just raw eroticism. Posters promoting safe sex and others calling for civil and human rights, leaflets and literature denouncing homophobia and negative preconceptions, others that

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvador_Bahia 28 May 2007

⁵ Interview with Dr. Luiz Mott 4 June 2007

homosexuality is not a sin, illness, or wrong, can also be found throughout the site. Both a celebration of gay pride and of comfort and solidarity, the GGB headquarters is a representation of the struggle for homosexual liberation.

The Grupo Gay da Bahia, the oldest gay rights organization in the Brazil, was founded in 1980 by Luiz Mott. Dr. Mott, a now retired professor of anthropology, and life-long advocate for gay rights and citizenship, founded the group after being he victim of a hate crime. Gay bashed along with his Bahian partner, Luiz Mott was attacked by a homophobic aggressor as he enjoyed the sunset with his lover. From this tragic experience, one shared by many Brazilian homosexuals, the Grupo Gay da Bahia was born. The group was the first in the city of Salvador to publicly denounce and demonstrate against institutionalized and societal homophobia. A pioneer in many respects, the GGB has served, and continues to serve, the gay community in Bahia and Brazil.

From the onset of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s to the present day, the GGB has promoted the prevention of STDs, HIV, and AID, as well as supported those individuals diagnosed with such diseases. GGB was the first in the nation to open up a dialogue concerning HIV and AIDS in the gay community, and among the first to educate this community regarding the epidemic, its contraction, and its prevention. Throughout the last 25 years, GGB has worked with the government in this fight, passing out leaflets promoting safe sexual practices, distributing condoms, and informing the general populations. GGB has also used its knowledge of gay neighborhoods and hang-outs to educate the gay community directly, distributing condoms and information at gay clubs, bars, saunas, and cinemas. GGB works with medical professionals and institutions,

educating the public, and directing individuals to the proper resources for both STD/HIV/AIDS testing and treatment. Working with a subset of the population generally ostracized and stigmatized by the population, GGB provides and has provided important resources and education for the quality of life of many homosexuals.

Politically, the Grupo Gay da Bahia continues to fight for gay rights and the citizenship of homosexual individuals throughout Brazil. The group promotes homosexual visibility in the community, planning and programming protests throughout the city for various causes related to the homosexual community. GGB documents the occurrences of discrimination, violence, and homicide in Bahia, as well as the rest of Brazil, reporting the findings to government officials and media alike. Exposing the horrific reality faced by many homosexuals, one of hate, intolerance, prejudice, and violence, the Grupo Gay da Bahia publishes their findings and presents them to the general Brazilian and international public. The GGB makes the voices of homosexual individuals heard through unity and solidarity.

This group was a first in Brazil, and was a pioneer in many of its initiatives. It was the first homosexual group to be legally recognized as a civil society. It was the first to dialogue with the federal government through the Ministry of Health. The mission of GGB has been to investigate and document homophobic crimes committed against homosexuals, and over the 27 years of the foundation's inception, GGB has produced many folders, posters, books, and materials regarding these issues in an attempt to maintain its three principle objectives. The group's principles are first, to denounce and fight against homophobia, Second, to educate the population regarding the truth

regarding homosexuality, and third, create a sense of consciousness in the homosexual community, so as to defend its rights and citizenship.⁶

Today, the Grupo Gay da Bahia works hand in hand with the Salvador municipality, the state of Bahia, and the federal government. The group was one of the first gay rights entities to open dialogue with Brazilian parliament and congress concerning gay civil rights and inclusion in society. The group is currently a champion for the homosexual right to marriage, and governmental attention to violence, discrimination, and intolerance against the homosexuality. Along with the ABGLT (Gay, Lesbian, Transgendered Association of Brazil) the Grupo Gay de Bahia has worked with the federal government on their project *Brasil Sem Homofobia* (Brazil Without Homophobia), an initiative aimed at alleviating preconceptions and discrimination aimed at the gay community. Among the first gay organizations to even be recognized by the Brazilian government, the Grupo Gay de Bahia has been a pioneer in the fight for gay rights in this particular region in the world.

Socially, the Grupo Gay da Bahia works to foster a sense of community for gay men in the city of Salvador. Inclusive to homosexual men, women, as well as every gender identification in between, GGB is, however, occupied mostly by men. Throughout its 27 year history, the Grupo Gay de Bahia has helped found many of its sister and brother organizations, including the Associations of Salvador prostitutes, lesbians, Black gay men, and transvestites. The group works in tandem with other organizations, collaborating for the general cause of homosexual emancipation. Specifically in regards to gay men, the group works as a social network for gay men in the city of Salvador. GGB hosts meeting almost daily, discussing issues and themes pertinent to different

⁶ Interview with Dr. Luiz Mott 4 June 2007

identities. A group for young gay men, attended by gay men from ages 16 to 29, meets every Wednesday and discusses issues regarding dating, familial relations, discrimination, and internalized homophobia. The group's headquarters serves as a safe space for young gay individuals, many of whom are not completely out of the closet, to fraternize with their peers, vent their frustrations, share their experiences, and express their sexuality freely, without societal reproach. On Thursday afternoons the site hosts transgendered and transvestite individuals. The group functions similarly that of the young gay men's, as a safe place to gather for good conversation, self expression, and group therapy. Social gatherings on Friday evenings are much more relaxed at the group's site, and serve the function of community and friendship building. Though never completely removed from struggle, intolerance, and discrimination, the homosexual reality is more than just fighting for your rights and living under social and institutional oppression, Friday nights at GGB are testaments to this fact.⁷

As you can see, the functions of the Grupo Gay da Bahia are multifaceted and significant. More important than the actual functions and operations of the group is the very presence of such an entity in the country. For centuries, homosexual men and women the world over have been forced to live lives in the margin of society. The Grupo Gay da Bahia includes a population that has been historically excluded, in both its locale and in its actions. The group has enjoyed many successes throughout the years and acknowledges that it still has many battles yet to fight. The headquarters of the Grupo Gay da Bahia is much more than a building, much more than windows, walls and doors. The space the group calls home is living, breathing history. Documenting a struggle in

⁷ Interview with Dr. Luiz Mott 4 June 2007

process for many centuries, the location of my research represents the fight against sexual oppression and homophobic discrimination.

Methodology of Research

My research consisted primarily of ethnographic fieldwork. Throughout the process I assumed the role of participant and observer, immersing myself in the gay community of Salvador through the Grupo Gay da Bahia, experiencing and observing it both personally and intellectually. I assumed the role of outside observant while conducting interviews, handing out questionnaires, and asking basic questions. I gathered the information for this monograph in the following four ways: community involvement, questionnaire/group discussion, one-on-one personal interviews with community leaders and activists, and finally a formal interview summing up my questions, concerns, and observations.

Instrumental to my research was my involvement with the gay community in Salvador. Done primarily through the Grupo Gay da Bahia, this experience allowed me to make important contacts, observe unique realities, and helped me to establish a good rapport with those I interviewed. While in Salvador I attended all of the weekly meeting the group offered, observing and participating in the group discussions. I frequented the site often, completing work on GGB computers, browsing through GGB archives and seeing the documentation of the group's activities, how and where it was cited in newspapers, as well as the documentation of the many physical, often deadly, accounts of violence against homosexual individuals in the region and throughout Brazil.

Also for the purposes of this monograph, I conducted a questionnaire and group discussion with 11 gay men at the Grupo Gay da Bahia. Using the time normally allotted

for the weekly young men's reunion, I passed out a questionnaire and allowed the men in the group to ask me questions concerning my research, my preliminary findings, and my opinions of Brazil and GGB. The questions on the questionnaire related directly to much of my reading, concerning issues of self esteem, discrimination, violence, education, and family life in relation to a homosexual identity. The questionnaires remained anonymous in the hopes that such anonymity would result in more candid, frank responses. I use this information to better understand the male homosexual reality in Salvador.

I also conducted one-on-one personal interviews with community leaders and activists associated with the GGB. My interviews with Cristiano, Marcelo, and Octavio, all affiliated with the Grupo Gay da Bahia aim to shed light on their life experiences, their own homosexual identities, and their involvement in the communities as *militantes*, or activists. My questions attempt to understand their coming out experiences, their formation to the gay men that they are today, their experiences with discrimination and violence, their roles in the community, as well as the problems that they see facing the gay community today. By interviewing community leaders and activist, I hope to gain an understanding of the gay reality in Salvador from those most actively involved and personally invested.

Finally, I conducted a formal interview with Dr. Luiz Mott, founder of the Grupo Gay da Bahia. I chose a more formal, less personal approach with Mott both out of respect and for our mutual comfort. I had never met Dr. Mott by the time of our interview, and given his political status as supreme authority regarding homosexual issues in Brazil, I thought it best maintain as much professional decorum as possible. I asked Dr. Mott about where the Brazilian Gay rights movement has been and where he

sees it going, the biggest problems facing the homosexual community, and many questions related specifically to the gay reality in the city of Salvador. I used Mott's unique vantage point as lead authority on gay rights to tie up many of the loose ends I encountered after my interview with the other three men.

Definition of Terms:

Veado: Portuguese word for reindeer, used in derogatory way to refer to a homosexual man. Brazil is the only country in the world to assign this animal to gay men, most likely because male reindeer congregate almost exclusively amongst themselves.

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer. American term used to describe the broad range of individuals encompassed by the word homosexual.

Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB): Organization founded in 1980 by Luiz Mott, activist and leading authority in the Brazilian gay rights movement. The group offers various services to homosexuals in and around the Salvador area, works with government officials, and is politically and socially active. The group, the oldest of its kind in all of Brazil, works to end discrimination, violence, prejudice, and injustice.

Militante: A political activist. Used among the men I interviewed to describe their own role in their communities and political struggles, an individual who is politically involved in the homosexual community, and gay rights movement.

Homosexual: An individual who sexually desires individuals of the same sex. Also used to describe a broad range of individuals not fitting into the rigid confinement of girl loves boy, boy loves girl, end of story.

Gay: Used primarily to describe men who have sex with men, or at least sexual desires for other men. The word is also used interchangeably, to the regret of many in the LGBTQ community, with LGBTQ, homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer.

Activist: Same as militante, an individual who is politically involved in the homosexual community, and gay rights movement, or any, movement and community for that matter.

“Homosexual Experience”: The many different realities lived by a diverse group of homosexuals. Comprised of many diverse and unique components for a broad range of diverse and unique individuals, the homosexual experience is, across respective realities, also influenced by similar unifying factors such as culture, religion, government, and location.

Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lésbicas, Bissexuais, Travestis e Transexuais (ABGLT): Founded in 1995 with 31 gay rights groups in Brazil ABGLT consists of 203 organizations and 141 respective LGBTQ groups, as well as 62 non-homosexual affiliated organizations. The group's mission is to end homophobia, violence, and discrimination in Brazil for the homosexual community, as well as work for human rights and the fight against AIDS.

Afro-Brazilian: Individuals of African descent living in Brazil. Afro-Brazilians are distinct from the general Brazilian population, suffering the effects of discrimination and colorism. For the purposes of this monograph, the term Afro-Brazilian is given to an identity and culture as well, one that, according to the individuals I have spoken with and articles I have read, not very inclusive of homosexual individuals.

Brazil Sem Homophobia: Social program implemented by the Lula government in 2004 aimed at eliminating homophobia, discrimination, and prejudice in Brazil. The program works with gay rights activists, groups, and homosexual communities, educating the Brazilian public concerning many of these issues. This is the first large-scale initiative of its kind to exist in the country.

Candómble: African religion practiced chiefly in Brazil but also in adjacent countries. The religion came from Africa to Brazil, carried by African priests and adherents who were brought as slaves between 1549 and 1850. Candómble is a much more tolerant religion in relation to homosexuality, with many of the religions gods practicing homoeroticism.

Preconception/Preconceito: Used for the purposes of this monograph in the same way one would use the word prejudice. Used throughout this paper as the following: to employ stereotypes and caricatures in the characterization and judgment of individuals, communities, and situations, e.g. gay individuals and communities.

Homophobia: Homophobia is the irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals. It can also mean hatred, hostility, or disapproval of homosexual people, sexual behavior, or cultures, and is generally used to insinuate bigotry. The term homophobic means "prejudiced against homosexual people."

Coming Out of the Closet: An individual accepting their own homosexuality and expressing it to the outside world.

Literature Review/Context:

I use the following literature to provide context into the homosexual experience in the Brazil. The sources cover the many hardships faced by this population. Both institutional and societal, the discrimination, violence, and prejudice felt by homosexuals in Brazil forces many to live lives in the margins of mainstream society. I will use the following data in comparison with the interviews and research I have conducted, to see both what the homosexual experience in Salvador looks like and how it compares to the one described in these books.

Beginning with Dr. Luiz Mott's book, *Epidemic of Hate*, we read a grim tale of homosexual oppression comprised of discrimination, violence, murder, and hate. Mott examines injustices against homosexuals in all of Brazil, documenting the loss of human and civil rights from this population. Examining homophobia in employment, family, society as a whole, religion, government, and other institutions, Mott explains the many ways in which Brazilian homosexuals are oppressed.

Looking first at the area of employment, Mott explains how many employers in Brazil outright refuse employment to homosexual individuals. Social pariahs, homosexuals are many times forced to hide their sexual orientation in fear of being fired or harassed in the workplace. Mott believes this problem to be specifically cumbersome for transvestite and transsexual individuals who are more easily identified. As a result many of these individuals, transvestites, turn to the professional sex industry as a means of subsistence, opening them up to a whole other set of dangers and problems.⁸

⁸ Mott, Luiz. *Epidemic of Hate: Violations of the Human Rights of Gay Men, Lesbians and Transvestites in Brazil*, (17-30).

In terms of familial discrimination, Mott explains how homosexuals are ostracized from family structures because of their sexual orientation. Kicked out of their homes, many gay teens are forced to live life on the street, in many cases turning to prostitution and drug use as a result. Brazilian parents are quoted as preferring a son who is a criminal, or one who is dead than a “veado.” Kids who demonstrate homosexual tendencies or who are caught experimenting in homoerotic practices are cruelly punished, most popularly by mothers who apply chili sauce to their anus. At its most benign, Mott reports that homosexual individuals are ridiculed in their home environments, picked on for showing signs of femininity.⁹

Homosexuality is not accepted by the bulk of Brazilian society. Gay men and women are the victims of discrimination, prejudice, hate crimes, and homicide all throughout Brazil. Heckled publicly on the streets, denied service at restaurants and bars, denied housing and other social services, gay men and women in Brazil are excluded from many opportunities. In Brazilian school systems, students are discriminated by students and teachers alike, many times kicked out of school for their sexual orientations. A barrage of verbal and physical assaults is documented in Mott’s book, ranging from shouts on the street to cracked skulls murder. What Luiz Mott describes is the dehumanization of a group of individuals solely because of their sexual expression. Brazil is proclaimed the world champion in the number of homosexuals murdered, with one homosexual killed every three days.

Religiously, homosexuals are categorized as sinners, excluded from institutions at both a personal and institutional level. The vast influence of the Catholic and Evangelical

⁹ Mott, Luiz. Epidemic of Hate: Violations of the Human Rights of Gay Men, Lesbians and Transvestites in Brazil, (28-39).

churches on Brazilian culture, society, and most importantly law and government, has resulted in the discrimination of LGBTQ individuals at many levels.

Police stop and harass transvestites, crimes against gay men go undocumented and unprotected, and gay men and women are negatively portrayed in newspapers, television, and other forms of media.

Homossexualidade: Mitos e Verdades, also written by Mott, is written for a homosexual audience, and those concerned with learning more about the homosexual reality. The book explains many basic truths and lies regarding sexuality, such as homosexuality is not a sin, homosexuality is not a crime, and homosexuality is not an illness. The book uses justifications for homophobia against itself. For example, Mott explains how Jesus Christ, the devotional focal point of Christianity, never denounces homosexuality and only promotes love and tolerance. The book criticizes the government and calls to question issues of citizenship. Considered equal under the law, all citizens are guaranteed to the legal protection of laws under the Brazilian constitution. Mott further explains Kinseyan notions of internalized homophobia as a cause for both societal and institutional homophobia.¹⁰

Mott explains how homosexuality is completely normal, natural, and that it has existed throughout history. Citing homosexual activity in animals throughout the animal kingdom phylum, Mott refutes arguments that homosexuality is merely the result of human perversion. Mott also sights important figures and societies throughout history who practiced homoeroticism. Examining the history of Brazil, as well as the history of Salvador, Luiz Mott describes how homosexuality not only existed in pre-colonial Brazil,

¹⁰ According to Dr. Kinsey, the majority of the adult population has been involved in homosexual experiences. Homophobia is a repression of those desires.

but was a widespread and respected practice. Mott also outlines homosexuality in regards to Afro-Brazilians, who as descendants of West African culture, came to “the New World” with their own set of homosexual traditions, noting at Candómble, a religion in practice today that not only accepts homosexuality, but reveres homosexual deities.¹¹

In Mott’s *Matei Porquei Odeio Gays*, he publishes the documentation of hate crimes, acts of violence, and homicides against homosexuals in contemporary Brazil. Dating no further back than 1999, *Matei Porquei Odeio Gays* serves as a reference book chronicling the various attacks on gay individuals throughout the country. In 2002, for example 90 gay men, 32 transvestite/transgendered, and 4 lesbians were murdered in Brazil as a result of their sexual orientation, totaling 126 individuals killed. Mott declares Brazil the champion in the number of homosexuals killed by both illustrating the numbers, and documenting the story behind the statistics. The book reads as a crime report, exposing murders, acts of violence, and torture to its readers.¹²

The last Mott book that I read, *A Cena Gay de Salvador*, explains the gay male community in the city of Salvador. Outlining different homosexual identities, e.g. masculine, effeminate, transvestite, etc, Mott provides the reader with an interactive guide to gay life in Salvador, both in the past and today. Anthropologically important, his book provides context to this community, as well as outlines places of homosexual inclusion and exclusion in Brazilian society. Describing night clubs, bars, hotels, motels, saunas, and cinemas, Mott describes the spaces where homosexuals have historically and currently make their presence felt.¹³

¹¹ Mott, Luiz. *Homossexualidade: Mitos e Verdades*. Salvador (61).

¹² Mott, Luiz. *Matei Porque Odeio Gays*, (13-34).

¹³ Mott, Luiz. *A Cena Gay de Salvador*. Salvador.

Finally, Marcelo Cerqueira's article titled *Raça e Homossexualidade: Um Dialogo Urgente* goes further in to detail regarding the homosexual experience for Afro-Brazilian men in particular. Cerqueira, current president of the Grupo Day da Bahia explains how internalized homophobia among black Brazilian men and among the Afro-Brazilian community is the result of colonization and religious oppression. Outlining African traditions and histories of homoeroticism, both out of ritual and out of pleasure, Cerqueira explains how the slave trade, colonialism, and the Catholic Church demonized this tradition. The legacy of colonization is felt to this day as gay and straight Afro-Brazilians struggle with homophobia, and the Afro-Brazilian community as a whole discriminates against homosexuals. Marcelo further explains how gay Black men in Brazil are not only ostracized in Black communities, but not fully accepted in the stereotypically white gay world.¹⁴

Interviews

As stated in my methodologies section, I conducted one group discussion in which I handed out questionnaires to eleven participants, conducted three informal interviews with community leaders affiliated with the Grupo Gay da Bahia, and one formal interview with Prof. Luiz Mott. Appendices A, B, and C show the different questions I asked in each situation. The following is a write up of their responses and documentation of our interaction.

¹⁴ Cerqueira, Marcelo. *Raça e Homossexualidade: Um Dialogo Urgente*.

Questionnaire

I conducted a questionnaire at the second to last group meeting I attended for gay young men at the Grupo Gay de Bahia. By my third meeting at the organization I felt that enough time had gone by to ask personal questions and analyze my peers. The group is frequented by roughly the same individuals, give and take a few people each meeting. The young men, whose ages range from 17-29 are all gay and completely out of the closet. Their education levels vary as much as their ages, as do their careers, living situations, and life experiences. The questionnaire covered the following issues: family and friends, schooling and education, societal interactions, and self-esteem.

Of the 11 men interviewed, 6 still live at home with their parents, most because of financial reasons. Only 3 of the 11 men reported that their parents still did not know that they were gay. When asked if they had ever been the victims of discrimination and or violence by member of their own family, 3 of the men reported that they had. One young man reports being the victim of such abuses by his own father. When asked a similar question concerning the same question in regards to friends, 5 of these men reported having experienced such problems. There is clearly not enough evidence to come to any definitive conclusions. However, viewing these results after a few weeks of interacting with these individuals was very surprising.

When asked about their education and school environment, 3 out of the 11 men reported suffering discrimination and or violence at school, and 5 out of the 11 men had problems with professors and or classmates because of their sexuality. Seeing the broad range of educational levels among the group, ranging from high school to college level

educations, I am left wondering whether or not discrimination and violence in academic situations led to an early withdrawal from any of their studies.

I asked the group questions regarding social acceptance by society as a whole, and unfortunately not surprised by some of the results. Just as predicted by Luiz Mott on the subject, only one person in the entire group felt that they had the freedom to express their sexuality freely and openly. When asked if they had been the victims of violence in a social setting, 2 of them reported having had problems. When asked if they were afraid to be gay, luckily only two said yes, one elaborating, “afraid that people would attack me just because I’m gay.” One of the no responses thanked the Grupo Gay da Bahia for not being afraid anymore.

Finally regarding their self esteem I was pleased to see that every single man participating in the group liked being gay, three individuals writing *adoro*, or I love. The only individual who hesitated a bit said he liked being gay but “only wish [he] could choose.” When asked if they would change their sexuality if they had the chance, only one individual said he would. This sole individual did stand out to me for more than just being the only individual willing to change. If up to him, this young man would like to become an extra terrestrial, claiming to be tired of the human race.

I was pleased to see that many of the factors I read that comprised the male homosexuality in Brazil were not necessarily the case for many of these individuals. I am happy to see that the majority of these individuals are out to their families and have not been the victims of discrimination and violence within their families and in Brazilian social interactions as a whole. The effects of institutional and societal homophobia could clearly be felt, though not directly experienced. All but one participant did not feel free to

express themselves sexually, exemplifying the oppression, repression, and exclusion felt by these individuals.

In analyzing the data from this small questionnaire I was reminded of a saying I heard while at the Grupo Gay da Bahia. “*Precisa ser macho para ser gay*,” or you have to be very manly to be gay, meaning the homosexual reality requires strength and resilience. Though criticized, harassed, alienated, discriminated, and abused, these individuals all said they would not change their sexuality, and that they enjoyed being gay. These responses to these two questions speak to a homosexual reality not only complicated with hardship, but one of perseverance, hope, strength, and commitment. My reasons for administering this questionnaire, as well as the purpose of this project, is to see how current discrimination, violence, and prejudice, as well as their legacies, effect the lives of homosexuals in Salvador. I was happy to find that many of these individuals are happy with their lives and with their sexualities. As hinted at by one participant who likes being gay “thanks to the GGB,” the Grupo Gay da Bahia may be a contributing factor to these positive results.

Cristiano

Cristiano Ferreras Santos, is a 33 years old gay male from Salvador de Bahia, he has lived here all of his life. One of 11 children, Cristiano is the only homosexual in his family. He considers his friends to be more like his brothers than his actual blood brothers. He says they understand him more than his own family. They function as another family in his life. Today, Cristiano serves as the vice president of GGB and also works as a clothing designer and restores church artifacts for a living. Cristiano finished his educational studies at the age of 21.

Cristiano shared with me that he first suspected he was gay at a very young age. He recalls experimenting sexually with boys at the age of 7. He believes that he did not know exactly what he was doing at the time, adding “what child does?”. At the age of 12 or 13, according to his own recollection, Cristiano began to question his sexuality and why he was attracted to men. About the time that we all discover who and what we are attracted to, Cristiano came to the realization that he was gay and attracted to men. At the age of 14 Cristiano came out to his mother. Met with reproach and discrimination by his parents and a few siblings, Cristiano was ultimately accepted as a gay man by the majority of his family. He shared with me that most of his friends stood by his side and supported his decision to come out of the closet. He did have one friend, however, that deserted him after this process. Cristiano has come to the conclusion that if friends leave his life, they were never really friends in the first place. He was most concerned with the reactions of his parents and family, everything else came second. Compared to the coming out experience of other homosexuals in Brazil, Cristiano believes that he had a relatively easier time. Many kids are kicked out of their homes, ostracized by their families who think homosexuality is a sickness. His own family did not accept him at first, that process took time. After a while his family came to the realization that Cristiano was not going to change. He did, however, endure many debates, discussions, jokes, and questions regarding his homosexuality. Cristiano believes that people his age had more difficult time with their coming out experience, suffered more discrimination from families than individuals do today. He feels that compared to most he had a positive experience

I next asked Cristiano about his experience with discrimination. Cristiano believes that he will always be suffering discrimination in regards to housing, , social interactions, and employment. He believes that it is a part of the homosexual reality and will always be. Cristiano particularly mentions the discrimination at the hands of the government and of the Evangelical church in Brazil. Personally discriminated against by such institutions, Cristiano believes that Evangelicals do not come to this country in the name of love, coming rather in the name of prejudice and hate. Cristiano considers himself a member of Candomblé, as it is more tolerant and incorporates gay and bisexual gods.

When questioned about violence Cristiano shared both his own experience and the experiences of other men he has come in contact with. While protesting on June 2nd a few years ago, an important date in Brazilian history, Cristiano was attacked by police. Protesting for gay rights, Cristiano felt particularly attacked and discriminated against by his own government because he is gay. Even with this violence Cristiano has never been afraid to reveal his homosexuality, “not one moment.” Cristiano believes that Brazil as a whole is very contradictory. “The Brazilian constitution says that all people are equal under the law, yet gays are discriminated against and prejudice continues to exist. In a country where all individuals are supposed to be free and where all are equal under the law, where sexuality is flaunted on the streets, and men dance with women and men, and people have casual sex, Brazil is the world champion in the number of deaths of homosexuals.” He believes that this is very contradictory. Cristiano has never been the victim of physical violence, only verbal. Insults to the like of “you want to be a woman,” “you’re not a man,” “you’re dirty,” “you’re sick,” have unfortunately been a part of his

homosexual reality. Cristiano laments, however, that virtually everyone knows someone who has had rocks thrown at them, bones broken, just because they were gay. Cristiano himself knows many individuals who are victims of physical violence. Even with the threat of physical violence Cristiano is not afraid to be gay, “not of AIDS, and not of violence.” According to Cristiano, being gay is being strong.

Cristiano has assumed the role of an activist in the gay community as a way to combat the ill effects of discrimination, violence and hate. He attends and organizes *militante* demonstrations, both for his community and for his own psychological well being as well. Cristiano believes that when one is discriminated against it hurts them significantly. Constantly made to feel inferior really damages your self-esteem. As a way of combat these ill effects Cristiano reads literature and attempts to understand his oppressors. Cristiano believes that those who discriminate are the truly sick individuals, and not homosexuals. He actively tries to combat preconceptions and prejudice by refusing to watch even television shows with negative portrayals of gay men and women. Also, as a way to maintain high self-esteem, Cristiano only surrounds himself with positive people who support him.

Cristiano believes that the biggest problem facing homosexuals today is that of preconception and prejudice. He believes that preceived notions of gays being sick, of them being sinners, of being dirty and ultimately wrong, have hurt homosexual individuals' self esteem. It is also Cristiano's opinion that laws do not exist in support of homosexuals. Cristiano believes that although “we” are considered equal under the law, this does not exist in reality. In his opinion, the Evangelical Church has found its way into parliament and the government. In general, he doesn't believe that the government

works with gay activists since many laws proposed to protect the civil and human rights of gays have been rejected. This ultimately results in the discrimination of a community, and a general “lack of change.”

Cristiano enjoys being gay. If sexual orientation were a choice and up to him, he would definitely be gay. He is, however, wary of saying choose in regards to sexual orientation, it leads back to a very problematic preconception that homosexuals have a choice in their orientation. He believes that it is “marvelous to be gay.” Cristiano considers himself happy to be gay. Even with pride and joy in his sexual orientation Cristiano would consider the possibility of changing his sexuality if he had the opportunity and if it was possible. He would consider changing his sexual orientation, not because negates his own homoeroticism and sexual practices, but to feel included in mainstream society.

Octavio

I interviewed Octavio Reis Filho, a 37 year old single Black gay man, and employee of the Grupo Gay da Bahia, on May 31st 2007 at the GGB headquarters. I got to know Octavio at during my time at the GGB, as he showed me around, introduced me to individuals at the headquarters, and informed me about the group’s history and functions. Octavio offered me insights into his own personal experience in coming out, with discrimination and violence, in coping with the stigmatizing effects of homophobia, with activism, and with self-esteem. Octavio, a pleasure to talk to and a great help in my understanding of the gay experience in Salvador spoke softly, calmly and rationally about his experience.

Octavio has lived in Salvador his entire life. An only child, he considers himself close to his parents. Octavio first realized that he was gay when he was 8 or 9 years old. Coming to the realization that he was in fact homosexual, Octavio came out of the closet at the age of 10 to both his parents. Concerned primarily by the reaction of his mom and dad, not as much by anyone else, Octavio was met by mixed reactions. His father supported his son's decision, acknowledging it as his decision and respecting it. The brother of a gay man, Octavio's father was more tolerant and accepting of homosexual individuals. His mother however, met Octavio with repression, believing her son's sexual orientation was a result of psychological problems. With time, however she came to accept her son's decision. Though not generally accepted by extended family, who talked about him behind his back, Octavio was primarily concerned with the reaction of his parents and did not care about the reaction of other individuals. Despite losing a few friends because of his sexual orientation, Octavio remains most of his childhood friends to this day. Compared to what he considers the coming out experience to be for most homosexuals in Brazil, Octavio considers his experience to have been an easy one. Most individuals, he laments, suffer much more discrimination, reproach, and violence. Octavio credits his "much easier time" to the support of family and friends and high self esteem.

Though not the direct victim of what he considers discriminatory acts, Octavio definitely feels indirectly discriminated in the areas of employment, education, government, and housing. He does feel discriminated against by the Catholic and Evangelical Churches, as "all gay men should." Octavio elaborates on how he feels indirectly discriminated by the government, stating that not all officials are bad, but that

the majority are. He believes that if that were not the case more initiatives and laws in favor of gay rights would have been passed already. Socially, Octavio recalled an incident in which he felt discriminated against. When leaving a bar with a group of gay men, Octavio and his *galera*, Portuguese for group of friends, were shocked to see “table of ‘*veados*’” written on their bill. Octavio ensured me that he made quite the scene and refused to pay the bill. Even with the widespread discrimination that Octavio believes to be present in Brazil, he is never afraid of revealing his sexual orientation. He maintains high self esteem to combat the negative effects of discrimination and prejudice, as well as living his life as a *militante*. Octavio believes that more and more, things are getting better. He is sure to document instances of discrimination so that future generations will know about the struggle for gay, civil and human rights.

In terms of violence, Octavio has never been the direct victim of physical violence, though he knows many individuals who have. He shared with me the story of a man beaten and kicked out of his home by his father, and another of a man who was stabbed repeatedly by his own grandmother. He believes, however, that violence against the homosexual community is more psychological than physical. Because of violence, he does not feel that he is at liberty to behave and express himself, but he “could care less.” Octavio refuses to let the oppression and discrimination of others interfere with the way he lives his life. He defends himself against the negative effects of violence by informing himself about homosexuality, knowing exactly what to say in debates to shut people up. Octavio credits the Grupo Gay da Bahia for educating him about laws, on how to defend himself, and how to communicate with his family. He believes that his gay friends have also helped in this process.

I next spoke to Octavio about activism in the gay community and his role. Octavio began coming to the Grupo Gay da Bahia as a young man, and has been returning ever since. He enjoys activism and fighting for the homosexual cause and struggle. He acknowledges that he did not suffer, but knows that many more do. He fights out of self-respect and out of respect for others suffering. Octavio knows that many are not educated about their rights and about their own hsexual orientation, and involves himself in the struggle because of that as well. Octavio believes that the majority of the Brazilian gay population is not active because of a lack of interest and alienation. He laments that men only come to GGB when they have problems, or have been the victims of something—not to participate in the cause. Octavio believes that the biggest problem facing the gay community is a lack of unity. Octavio believes that unity would make things much better for the homosexual community, “if everyone united we would definitely see changes. Things would be easier.”

Octavio thinks being gay is cool. He is very proud of his sexuality, and of the resilience of the homosexual community, “even with so many problems, we can still be happy.” He believes that gay men are survivors, and that even with discrimination, violence, and prejudice they are still going strong. Octavio shared a quote with me that he found relavent to the homosexual experience. “Cada um sabe a dor e a delicia de ser o que é,” every person knows the pain and joy of being who they are. Octavio would never change his sexual orientation and believes that independent of our sexuality, we all need to learn to respect each other.

I took a lot from my interation with Octavio, both during this interview and during my time with the Grupo Gay da Bahia. His experience speaks to more than just

the violence, discrimination, prejudice, and hate against homosexuals. Octavio's experience speaks directly to a struggle for human rights, hope in the future, and the active contribution to the end of oppression and the emancipation of the homosexual population.

Marcelo

I interviewed Marcelo Cerqueira in his Salvador apartment. After a day of playing phone tag with Mr. Cerqueira. I was finally able to sit down with him and begin a conversation. I enjoyed our time together and also found his contribution to this monograph very meaningful and insightful. Marcelo is 36 year old Black gay man. Current president of the Grupo Gay da Bahia, Marcelo also works for the city of Salvador. Marcelo is completely out of the closet, to friends, family and society, "always, totally." When asked about his coming out experience, Marcelo reports having come out at age 18, a bit "tarde," or late, by his own admission, and considered a positive experience. Marcelo relied on the support of family and friends, who at first expressed concern over his decision to come out of the closet, but eventually came to respect his decision. Marcelo did not experience what he feels most individuals experience. As a result of homophobia, family relations, and discrimination many gay individuals are forced to live double lives. Though Marcelo did experience initial reproach by others, he never was the victim of outright discrimination and violence, ultimately accepted for who he is. He looks at this time in his life as positive compared to other homosexuals in the country, who experience much more problems in this process. He credits this to his role as an activist, entering the world of activism right after pronouncing his sexuality.

As a gay man, Marcelo understands the complexities that exist because of the intersection of identities. More concerned with his identity as a gay male than his identity as a black man, Marcelo is often criticized within the Afro-Brazilian community. Throughout his life, Marcelo admits to feeling more discrimination from straight black men than by any others. Having had sexual and romantic relationships almost exclusively with white men, Marcelo also feels criticized for this reason as well. Feeling most uncomfortable around black *militantes* in particular, Marcelo laments that black men are not accepted to be black. For this reason, Cerqueira, as a black gay man, does not feel accepted by the Afro-Brazilian community.

Other than feeling the indirect adverse effects of discrimination, violence, and prejudice, Marcelo reports never having suffered from the directly by society as a whole. Like the other men interviewed, Marcelo too knows of many who have suffered such indignities, but contributed his own aversion to his role as an activist and position in the Salvador municipality. He considers himself to be a well known and well respected advocate for human and homosexual rights. He believes that his role as an outspoken activist and participation in the movement has allowed him escape many of the direct assaults on homosexuals throughout the country.

When asked about problems facing the homosexual community as a whole, Marcelo first mentioned problems with socio-economic class. Individuals of the lower class are victims of discrimination by the homosexual movement itself. Stereotypically a movement of educated, middle class individuals, the homosexual movement excludes the majority of homosexuals who do not fit that mold. Marcelo considers the exclusion of people of lower economic levels to be a societal problem as well. In terms of gay

activism, Marcelo believes that the biggest problem is a lack of resources and a lack of solidarity among Brazilian gay men. A lack of funds and a lack of qualified and dispensable individuals is the biggest problem facing the gay movement in Brazil. He also believes that many gay men are more interested in homoeroticism, but less concerned with the commitment of a homosexual identity and activism. Cerqueira believes that fewer people are *militantes* today because it is much easier to form gay communities and networks outside of the activist world. For Marcelo, activism was more than just organizing and the fight for human rights, it was for the building of community, family, and coping with the negative factors that go into the homosexual identity.

Marcelo loves being gay and has never had a problem with his homosexuality. Most of all Marcelo enjoys being gay because he “hates sexual relations with women.” Marcelo only wishes that more individuals were gay, so to understand what being gay actually means. Marcelo would never change his sexuality if that were in fact possible. Being gay is, in his words, “maravilhoso” or marvelous. Unfortunately, as Marcelo hesitantly believes, most homosexuals would not agree with him. Aside from being victims of discrimination, violence, and prejudice, many gay men and women still believe that their own sexual orientation is a sin, an illness, and wrong.

Luiz

Luiz Mott, retired Professor of Anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia, 61 years old, and founder of the Grupo Gay da Bahia was born in São Paulo and came to Salvador in 1979. In deep admiration of his 30 years of political activism, I had the honor and privilege of sitting down with Dr. Mott and ask him a few concluding questions. A

more formal interview than the three previous ones, Mott provided me with many concluding facts and answers for my research.

My first question was how the general Brazilian male homosexual reality that you speak of in your books compare to that of the male homosexual reality here in Salvador. Mott replied that Salvador is considered to be a pretty gay city. He credits the city's population, 70% Afro-Brazilian, to this reputation. According to Mott, the blackness of Salvador makes for a less repressive and more tolerant environment. In addition to the Afro-Brazilian population, Mott also credits the presence of the Grupo Gay da Bahia, and his own presence in the city as contributing factors to the city's reputation. He believes that the GGB, the oldest gay rights organization and founder of other gay rights groups, such as those for lesbians, black gay men, transvestites and prostitutes, has made the city more welcoming and more responsive to homosexual men and women. As the country's leading authority on issues regarding homosexual right, Luiz Mott himself is a well noted and easily recognized Brazilian national. Quoted in books and newspaper, and shown frequently on television in a homosexual capacity, Mott believes that his affiliation with the city of Salvador has also contributed to this reputation. Mott believes that this is more a perception than a reality. Dr. Mott does not actually believe that the city of Salvador has a gay population any larger than that of Recife or Belo Horizonte, with similar population numbers. He does however concur with most, that Salvador does have a significant homosexual presence.

When asked how he has taken to the role of supreme authority on the Brazilian homosexual reality, Mott responded that he is where he is today because of other factors of his identity. He credits his rise to power, so to speak, to his position as an intellectual,

a member of the middle class with financial resources, and his uninterrupted presence as a community leader for close to 30 years. The homosexual movement is in need of individuals like him, leaders with not only the intellectual background and capacity to organize other individuals, but with the financial resources to contribute as well. The gay movement is very poor in terms of finances. Mott believes that the Grupo Gay de Bahia has survived as long as it has, and continues to survive, because of his financial help. The groups current and last six headquarters have all belonged to Mott, and when he dies, Mott plans to leave money for the group as well. Mott also credits his position and success in political activism to his São Paulo roots, a descendant of the Portuguese colonizers who conquered this region of the world.

I next asked Mott whether, in his opinion, things were getting better for homosexuals in the country. After pausing for a few seconds. Dr. Mott said that they were. Mott then began listing many of the advances in the community over the past decade. Among them, former president Fernando Cardoso publicly declaring the word homosexual, the first Brazilian president to do so, in 1995, and later the first to include the word in federal documentation. He mentioned the increase in the number of gay pride parades in the country, with over 200 parades in Brazil, São Paulo's the biggest in the world with 2 million participants. He spoke of the formation of the ABGLT, a network of hundreds of organizations banded together for human rights, as well as the federally initiated and funded Brasil Sem Homophobia, aimed at ending discrimination and prejudice in the country. In his opinion, television shows are showing fewer stereotypes, journalists are using less aggressive language in regards to homosexuals, and the general

population is relatively more sympathetic to the homosexual cause. Mott does not believe that things are getting worse for homosexuals throughout Brazil.

I next asked Mott if he believed that the government was doing enough for homosexuals in the country. Never in Dr. Mott's life has he seen so many initiatives, so much good spirit, and so many good intentions demonstrated toward the homosexual community on behalf of Brazilian government. Unfortunately, Mott reports that many of these good intentions and promises to citizenship have gone unrealized. For example, Mott explained how through the federally implemented Brazil Sem Homophobia, over 50 proposals were presented to the government by homosexual organizations, activists, and community leaders but have yet to be implemented or realized. A gay front does exist in Brazilian parliament and congress. Just as a front exists for Afro-Brazilian rights, women's rights, and indigenous rights, so too does there exist a group of deputies, senators, and congressman aligned with the homosexual agenda and struggle for gay rights.

When asked what he considered to be the biggest problems facing the homosexual community today Mott replied that the biggest problem in Brazil is a lack of security. Physical security is a problem due to violence, verbal and physical, and also the alarming rates of homicides. Brazil is the world champion in the killing of homosexuals, reported Mott. The second problem in Mott's opinion has to do with internalized homophobia. He feels that if 10% of Brazil's population is made up of gays, lesbians, and transvestites, constituting about 20 million GLBT individuals, not even 10% of those individuals are out, they are still closeted and have yet to realize their own happiness and sexual

expression. This population still suffers from internalized homophobia and Mott considers this to be a great problem.

I asked Mott why he felt the great majority of homosexuals do not participate in activism and are not a part of the politically active gay community. He replied that a big problem with gay men is that alienation. Of the 20 million homosexuals that exist in the country not even 2 million are out, and those about 0.1% or less are politically active. Furthermore, Mott explained that very few Brazilians buy into solidarity compared to North Americans and Europeans, where the participation in community service and volunteer work is much greater. Fundraising and organizing does not exist here, according to Mott, there exists a great individualism and egotism in Brazilian culture. Also, Mott believes that of those homosexuals who are out, the ones with the capacity to produce the most change are not politically active.. Gay men and women of the middle and upper-middle classes do not participate in the movement because they do not suffer the same pervasive effects of homophobia as do their working class homosexual counterparts. Acting much like wealthy Afro-Brazilians who turn their back on their own communities, Mott believes that individuals with financial resources abandon their gay brothers and sisters, as well as the gay cause.

I closed our interview asking Mott if there was anything that he wanted to add to our conversation. He replied as follows,

“I am no longer the president of GGB, and I no longer work with the ABGLT, but I still continue to fight and continue in activism. I hope that all of this work all of these years that I have dedicated my entire life to the homosexual movement will mean that my successors will finally achieve victory and tolerance.”

Conclusion

The male homosexual experience in Salvador is comprised of, both directly and indirectly, institutional and societal violence, discrimination, and prejudice. Though not as drastic as that reality discussed in the literature I read, at least not for the participants in my study, the legacy and influence of institutionalized homophobia, discrimination, violence, prejudice, and murder clearly effect the lives of gay men living in Salvador, all of Brazil, and the world. Hundreds of years of physical, psychological, and social sexual repression has resulted in a population of gay men stigmatized and traumatized by their own sexual orientations. Though many of the individuals I had the pleasure of talking to for the purposes of this monograph experienced the effects of such adverse factors listed above, the majority did so indirectly. I in no way attempt to minimize the discrimination, violence, and overall oppression discussed in Luiz Mott's literature, nor do I make the claim that such direct forms of discrimination are not a reality for many, if not the majority of individuals living in Brazil. I do, however, conclude that the homosexual experience that I observed in Salvador, as well as the homosexual experiences that were presented to me by interviewees and research participants was not as directly oppressive as those I read about.

It is my opinion that the Grupo Gay da Bahia, through its presence and functions in Salvador, has helped create this reality. As credited by Luiz Mott, the presence of the organization has given the city a gay friendly reputation and has helped further gay political activism. The gay men I interviewed, as well as the young men who participated in my questionnaire all had one thing in common, active participation with the Grupo Gay da Bahia. A part of a larger gay community and of a gay support network, the

participants in my study have avoided many of the greatest problems believed to affect the gay community, alienation internalized homophobia. Creating a sense of gay pride in this particular community, the Grupo Gay da Bahia helps incorporate self-esteem into the realities of many gay men in Salvador.

Finally, I conclude that the gay male reality in Salvador is more than just one of victimization and hardship. Gay men are more than passive victims of their homophobic environments. Gay men are survivors, are persistent, and are revolutionary. Just as much as violence, discrimination, and prejudice make up the male homosexual reality in Salvador, so do resistance, activism, and the fight for human rights. Gay men in the city of Salvador, with the help of the Grupo Gay da Bahia and many other gay and human rights organizations, are expanding their societal margins everyday.

I ultimately conclude that the male homosexual reality in Salvador is one of hope and overcoming historical and empirical oppression.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Interview with Cristiano Ferreras Santos 31 May 2007

Interview with Octavio Reis Filho 21 May 2007

Interview with Marcelo Cerqueira 27 May 2007

Interview with Dr. Luiz Mott 4 June 2007

Questionnaires 31 May 2007

Secondary Sources

1. Cerqueira, Marcelo. *Raça e Homossexualidade: Um Dialogo Urgente*. Grupo Gay da Bahia, http://www.ggb.org.br/marcelo_artigo_raca.html, May 16, 2007.

2. Mott, Luiz. A Cena Gay de Salvador. Salvador: Grupos Gays da Bahia, 2000.
3. Mott, Luiz. Epidemic of Hate: Violations of the Human Rights of Gay Men, Lesbians and Transvestites in Brazil. Salvador: Grupos Gays da Bahia, 1996.
4. Mott, Luiz. Homosexualidade: Mitos e Verdades. Salvador: Grupo Gay da Bahia, 2003.
5. Mott, Luiz. Matei Porque Odeio Gays. Salvador: Grupo Gay da Bahia, 2000.
6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvador_Bahia 28 May 2007

Indications for Further Research

Many of the flowing issues are briefly touched upon but not given nearly enough attention. I purposely neglected to research the homosexual reality in regards to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the gay experience for Afro-Brazilians, as well as issues associated with socio-economic class. These three issues are worthy of research independent of my project goal, understanding the male homosexual experience in regards to violence, discrimination, prejudice and hate.

All three issues do, however, appear in this monograph, if only haphazardly and incompletely. I simply chose not to elaborate on these issues out of time constraints as well as resource constraints. Working with the GGB, my line of research was more clearly outlined and better managed. Issues of class and homosexuality as well as those concerning AIDS in Salvador could be facilitated with the GGB. As for the Afro-Brazilian experience and its relation to homosexuality, the black men's group Quimbanda-Dudu, also located in Salvador would surely help.

Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. Quantos anos voce tem?
2. Qual é sua orientação sexual?
3. Você esta fora do armario? Por que ou por que não?
4. Sua familia sabe que voce é homossexual?
5. Você mora em case de seus pais? Por que ou por que não?
6. Você ha sido vitima de discriminação ou violênca em por meio de sua familia por ser homossexual?
7. Você tem boa relação com sua familia. Por que ou por que não?
8. Qual é sua educação?
9. Você ha sido vitima de discriminação ou violênca por sua orientação sexual na escola?
Sim sim, quais?
10. Em algum tempo em sua vida, você ha tido problemas com pessoas por ser homossexual? Professores, amigos, etc. Sim sim, quais foram?
11. Falando da sociedade geral, você senti seguro de espresar sua orientação sexual publicamente? Por que?
12. Você ha sido a vitima de discriminação ou violencia em situações sociais?
13. Você em algum tempo tem medo de ser gay? Medo de que a gente acha de você?
14. Voce gosta de ser gay? Por que ou porque não?
15. Sim você pudera, mudaria sua orientação sexual? Por que ou por que não?

Appendix B

Informal Interview Questions:

General

- Como é seu nome completo?
Quantos anos voce tem?
Como você se identifica? Sexo, orientação sexual, etc.
De onde é você?
Quantos anos voce cheva em Salvador?
Você vove sua voda fora do armario sempre?
Você tem familia propia?
Você esta em comunicação com sua familia de sangue?
Qual é sua educação?
Quantos você tinha quando acabou seus estudos?
- #### Coming Out
- Quantos anos você tinha quando primer sabias que eras gay?
Quantos anos você tinha quando por primeira vez aceitou que você era gay?
Quantos anos você tinha ficou fora do armario?
Como foi essa experencia? Mau? Boa?
Sim voce precisava ajuda, quem lhe ajudou?
Como reaccionou seus pais?
Sua familia?
Seus amigos?
Você tinha mais apoio ou repreensão em esse processo?

Em sua opinião, como foi sua experiência comparada à experiência geral no Brasil?

Discrimination?

Em algum tempo em sua vida. Você a sido a vítima de discriminação por ser homossexual? Em quais situações?

No Brasil, em algum momento você a tido medo de revelar sua orientação sexual?

Em sua opinião, como é sua experiência com o preconceito e discriminação comparada aos Brasileiros gay em geral?

Violence

Você ha sido vítima da violência por ser homossexual?

Você conhece pessoas que ham sido vítimas da violência por ser homossexual?

Por causa da violência, você acha que muda sua forma de ser?

Você senti livre de ser quem vicê quiere ser? Mas, você acha que tem a liberdade de ser homossexual no ambiente Brasileiro?

Coping

Como é que você a combatido os afeitos de discriminação, violência, e preconceito pessoalmente?

Como é que voce ajuda a outros/outras sobreviver as stigmas negativas de ser hopmossexual?

Qual é a importancia de sua familia em este processo?

Qual é a importancia de seus amizades?

Activism

Que é o que voce acredita são os maiores problemas para a comunidade homossexual em Brasil?

Quais são os mais grandes obtstacolos pra os ativistas GLBT?

Porque você decidiu ser militante?

Você gosta de ser militante?

Quais coisas você acredita que lhe ajudou ser militante? Mas, que coisa formo sua identidade como militante?

Porque você acredita que a maioria da poblacão gay não é militante?

Self-Esteem

Você gosta de ser homossexual? Sempre ha gostado?

Que é que você gosta de serr gay?

Que é o que você não gosta de ser gay?

Como é que ser gay afeita seu auto-estima?

Sim você pudesse mudar sua orientação sexual para heterossexual o faria?

Você tem alguma outra coisa que gosatria falar?

Appendix C

Luiz Mott Questions

Muitos de seus livros falam sobre a realidade geral gay do Brasil. Como é que compara a experiência gay e Salvador com a realidade que você fala em seus livros?

Individualmente, como é que a realidade individual gay comopara as realidades de individuos em o Brasil geral?

Como é ser a autoridade maior do movimento gay em Brasil? É um papel que você esperava ou queria?

As coisas ham melhorado?

Coisas estão peror?

Você acha que o governo esta fazendo suficiente para a luta gay?

Que é o que você acredita são os problemas mais grandes da comunidade gay em Brasil?

Por que você acredita que a maioria de homossexuais em Brasil não são militantes?

Appendix D

1. Could you have done this project in the USA? What data or sources were unique to the culture in which you did the project?

I could not have done this project in the United States. My project dealt with the homosexual reality specific to Brazil, so by that factor alone, my ability to complete this project in the United States would be impossible. While I did find similarities in the Brazilian homosexual reality and the homosexual reality in the United States, given the unique nature of Brazilian politics, culture, and race identity, I do not feel that the majority of my observations overlap with ones I may have observed in the United States.

2. Could you have done any part of it in the USA? Would the results have been different? How?

I suppose I could have done the preliminary preparation in the United States, though a lot of the literature I employed for the use of this monograph could only be found in Brazil and was in its original Portuguese. Aside from the two English books that I used for this monograph, as well as the articles I found online, I do not see this project as a feasible endeavor in the United States.

3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning?

The research process for the ISP was different for me. I am a history major, and not used to conducting research in this manner. I am used to reading literature concerning my area of research, focusing mostly on secondary resources, and utilizing primary resources in a much more analytic as opposed to such a participatory way. I would not say that I stretched myself too far in the completion of this project. I have done field work before and was familiar with the methods I used in completing my research.

4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources?

I would say that about 1/3 primary data and 2/3 secondary sources. The bulk of my information comes from participating and interacting with the Grupo Gay da Bahia, as well as through interviews. A lot of my primary data, however, is supported by secondary sources.

5. What criteria did you use to evaluate your data for inclusion in the final monograph? Or how did you decide to exclude certain data?

I am not sure if I really had a process in doing this. I basically used my preliminary ISP proposal to help me in this process. Information that came out through interviews and research related directly to my proposal is included in this monograph. Superfluous information that would require intensive research and elaboration was mentioned in passing, and not given as much attention. The selection had very much to do with time constraints and convenience as well.

6. How did the “drop-offs” or field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?

I would say that they did not, really. I feel that I still had the same awkward experience, difficulties, and frustrations I had with or without the drop-off and field experiences. The only way that I see those experiences helping me is in giving me a bit of confidence. I was not concerned with language barriers, or not knowing where I was or where I was going. I feel that the drop-off and field exercises instilled a sort of blind faith in me that everything would turn out alright. Luckily everything did.

7. What part of the FSS most significantly influenced the ISP process?

I believe that the selection process of the ISP and my proposal were significantly affected by the FSS. Like I said, I was not too familiar with this entire process, The FSS helped me get started, and comfortable with the project, I also feel that the FSS helped make the completion of the ISP less stressful. Through the FSS the ISP seemed less daunting. I knew that completing such a process was definitely possible.

8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing the ISP? Were you able to resolve these and how?

The only real problems I encountered throughout y ISP process were ethical ones. I questioned my role as an outsider coming in to communities for the sole purpose of conducting research. I was afraid that I was wasting my organizations time, and not really giving anything back in return.

9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could these have been resolved?

I did not experience time restraints.

10. Did your original topic change and evolve as you discovered or did not discover new and different resources? Did the resources available modify or undermine the topic?

My topic did not change during the ISP process. The way I imagined myself completing the project did however, I imagined myself interviewing a much broader range of homosexual men. I focused primarily on community leaders for two reasons. First, I had easy access to these individuals through the GGB. Second, these individuals were definitely knowledgeable about many of the problems facing this particular

community, as well as the methods employed by this community to combat the negative effects of this reality.

11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviewee, publications, etc.?

I found the Grupo Gay de Bahia online, everything else pretty much flowed from there. Once I established the validity and feasibility of working with GGB, I looked through their website and found the name of Luiz Mott. I discovered his work, *An Epidemic of Hate*, in our library. Once arriving in Salvador I was given contacts by GGB for interviewees, given additional publications, and allowed the opportunity to participate within the community.

12. What method(s) did you use? How did you decide to use such method(s)?

I conducted interviews and involved myself in the GGB community. I chose to participate with the Grupo Gay da Bahia as a way of building positive rapport, hopefully making interviews more organic and comfortable. I conducted one formal interview with Dr. Luiz Mott, both out of respect and because I felt the situation called for it. I am not sure how I thought to use such methods. I went with my gut, I suppose.

13. Comment on your relations with your advisor: indispensable? Occasionally helpful? Not very helpful? At what point was he/she most helpful? Were there cultural differences, which influenced your relationship? A different understanding of educational processes and goals? Was working with the advisor instructional?

My advisor Cristiano was great. He was a very open individual who never seemed bothered by my questions, and was always very helpful. He helped me come in contact with individuals and made me feel a part of the community. Cultural differences did influence our relationship. I feel that I was a bit closed off and timid around him and the rest of the group, but other than that I can not remember a situation in which cultural differences were a problem. Working with my instructor, or should I say, working with the many individuals at the Grupo Gay da Bahia was very fun, education, and instruction.

14. Did you reach any dead ends? Hypotheses which turned out to be not useful? Interviews or visits that had no application?

I am happy to report that I did not reach any dead ends. All of the interviews I conducted contributed to this monograph and were very enlightening, interesting, and fun to conduct. Some of the time I spent at the GGB did not directly contribute to this work, but I enjoyed my time at the organization just the same.

15. What insights did you gain into the culture as a result of doing the ISP, which you might not otherwise have gained?

I gained insights into the specific gay culture that exists in Salvador and in Brazil. I learned more about cultural attitudes towards my area of research and about cultural attitudes in regard to activism and solidarity. I would say that I gained insights as to the

nuances associated with Brazilian culture. That is to say that the more I have gone searching for a “Brazilian” culture, the more I have found complexities and variations. I found this to be the case especially in regards to gay culture.

16. Did the ISP process assist your adjustment to the culture? Integration?

The ISP process definitely allowed me to feel more comfortable interacting with and among Brazilian culture, as well as gay Brazilian culture. The independent nature of the ISP facilitated in this, forcing me out of my comfort zone and allowing me little to no escape from uncomfortable situations. Adjustment into Brazilian culture was in many instances forced upon men. I would not say that I felt integrated into the culture. Throughout my research process I was very clearly seen as the other, analyzing not just the gay experience but the *Brazilian* gay experience. I do believe, however, that I was included a bit more at GGB as a gay man, having shared many of the same experiences.

17. What were the principal lessons you learned from the ISP process?

I definitely learned more about the homosexual reality in Brazil, and about institutional and societal measures in play to combat the ill effects of discrimination, violence, and prejudice. I learned a bit about myself as well. I learned that I can be independent and figure things out on my own when I need to. I feel that the ISP was more a time of personal growth than academic accomplishment. Working hand in hand with other individuals, ones so open to help a complete stranger, was really impressive and touching. As cheesy as it sounds, I learned a lot from the group’s openness, inclusiveness, and hospitality.

18. If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendations to him/her?

My advice would be to be open and uninhibited. Every individual that I encountered was open and responsive to my needs; my only regret is that I may have not reciprocated that behavior. I would advise him or her to be patient that not everything pans out exactly as you imagined, especially when working with a group as busy and dynamic as the Grupo Gay da Bahia. My last recommendation would be to give back to the community and organization. Just as much as you are interested in your project and with the organization, they are interested in you and your situation. The research process can definitely be a mutual exchange of information.

19. Given what you know now, would you undertake this or a similar project again?

In a heartbeat. If I had to do this project over again I would jump at the opportunity, if only to make it better. I enjoyed my experience very much, and would go back in an instant to fix the few and small regrets that I have in regard to this entire process. I would mainly go back and open up more, loosen up, and try not to take myself or this project way too seriously.